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Summary of Black Theatre:

Black theatre has been prevalent since the 1700’s, however it was previously portrayed through slaves and through white people dressed as black people (minstrel shows). However, black theatre really started to gain more footing in the 1800’s- the first known play written by a black man was James Brown’s “King Shotaway” in 1823, and the first ever produced by a black man was William Wells Brown’s, “The Escape,” published in 1858. It wasn’t until the early 1900’s that their plays started to gain acclaim or success. During the Harlem Renaissance there was a huge burst in success within black theatre- this was from 1920’s-1930’s. There was a lot of experimental theatre happening throughout that time, but after World War II black theatre changed. It began to carve out a place for itself separate from white theatre, and it was used to create ideals that the black community wished to see within its radicals.

Black Theatre continued to become more progressive, eventually becoming a platform where African American’s could address real life issues with race and discrimination. In the 60’s and 70’s (when Childress wrote Wedding Band) black theatre began to really delve into the years of discrimination, enslavement, and abuse that the black community endured from whites.